September 20, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Marshall  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Primary Health & Retirement Security  
479A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Sanders and Marshall:

Thank you for working together to introduce legislation to address the significant workforce needs of our nation’s healthcare sector and to invest in programs, which will improve the pipeline for this workforce for years to come.

NAF is a national nonprofit organization that brings together education, business, and community leaders to ensure high school students are college, career, and future ready. For over 40 years, NAF has partnered with high schools in historically under-resourced communities to enhance school systems by implementing NAF academies – small, focused learning communities within traditional public high schools themed around growing industries, including health sciences. With a rigorous program of study and a progressive continuum of work-based learning activities designed to build career awareness, exploration, and preparation, students gain the skills and knowledge needed to make informed choices and be successful in their future careers. NAF promotes open enrollment in our career academies, allowing students of all backgrounds and capabilities to participate and helping to address systemic, educational, and professional barriers faced by marginalized populations.

NAF Academies of Health Sciences (AOHS) are addressing the healthcare workforce shortage by equipping high school students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to pursue employment in the healthcare industry. Our academies teach industry-focused courses, such as anatomy and physiology, biotechnology, global health, and health careers, and allow students to gain career-specific knowledge and skills through hands-on, work-based learning activities with local industry professionals. Many academies provide the opportunity for students to earn certifications such as Certified Nursing Assistant, EKG Technician, Emergency Medical Technician, Certified Medical Administrative Assistant and countless others that increase employability and earning potential.

NAF specifically applauds inclusion of high school students and a focus on under-resourced communities within the establishment of a workforce innovation grant program for allied health professionals. Exposing high school students to career opportunities is a critical piece in building a future-ready healthcare workforce, as NAF knows first-hand. Further, prioritizing work-based learning within the healthcare sector will help students gain invaluable experience and an understanding that will foster an interest in pursuing careers in nursing, medicine, public health, and related fields.
We appreciate your leadership and efforts to strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline across the country and strongly support the inclusion of high school students in these opportunities. Our nation’s workforce needs cannot afford to ignore this prime cohort of students in preparing them for careers in healthcare. As NAF continues to prepare future healthcare workers for the country, we hope to have a supportive partner at the federal level with the establishment of these programs.

Sincerely,

Colleen Devery

Chief Strategy Officer | NAF